

The State Committee for Research honors Alaska's

Northern Innovators



Pat Holloway

Northern Innovators Hall of Fame Member

A peony marketing expert who spoke to the Alaska Peony Growers Association winter conference pointed to a map that showed the locations of peonies grown around the world. Many are grown in temperate areas, but Alaska stands alone as a peony producer at 60 degrees north latitude. The flowering season for peonies is June through September in Alaska when fresh cut peony stems for the floriculture markets from other parts of the world are not available.

Dr. Patricia Holloway of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) School of Natural Resources and Extension was the first to recognize the commercial opportunities of the peony industry in Alaska. Her research and public education efforts were instrumental in helping peony growers throughout the state capitalize on Alaska's unique growing season, and there are now more than 100 members of the statewide Alaska Peony Growers Association. The association furthers education and research among growers and promotes Alaska Grown peonies to worldwide markets. Even though she retired in 2015, she has continued her research

and education efforts to support the expanding Industry.

In 2016, growers shipped more than 200,000 stems to local, state and international markets including the U.S., Canada, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam and Singapore. The Alaska Peony Growers Association reports that in 2016, 69 growers planted more than 200,000 peonies, and the number was expected to increase to 250,000 plants in 2017. Her research, and this new industry, have received worldwide attention from some of the largest cut flower markets in the Netherlands, Great Britain, New Zealand, Israel and China.

Another innovative accomplishment for Holloway was transforming research plots at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm into one of the most-visited campus attractions and a center for horticultural research, outreach, and education. Holloway, colleagues, and many volunteers began the Georgeson Botanical Garden in 1989, and it is now a valuable community and University asset. It is the center for horticultural crop trials, peony research, plant hardiness trials, educational programs,

a children's garden, as well as public concerts and events.

Holloway has received many awards for her work, including a 2015 Usibelli Distinguished Service Award and she was the first recipient of the Growers Cup Award from the Alaska Peony Growers Association.

Holloway began her association with the university in 1975 as a research aide at the Agricultural Experiment Station. She worked for three years in the horticulture program before earning a doctorate in horticulture at the University of Minnesota in 1982. Her dissertation was on lingonberries, and she continues her research interest in Alaska wild and cultivated berries.

Dr. Patricia Holloway is a long-time Alaskan who – through innovation, experimentation, creativity, and hard work – has created a new and burgeoning industry in Alaska and a center for horticulture research, education and outreach at UAF.